

*The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team*

Emery High School
955 North Spartan Center Street
Castle Dale, Utah 84153

April 9, 2002



Utah State Office of Education
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EMERY HIGH SCHOOL
955 North Spartan Center Street
Castle Dale, Utah 84153

April 9, 2002

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FOREWORD

A major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate inservice growth and school improvement. Consequently, requirements include not only meeting the standards of the Utah State Office of Education, but also completing a school evaluation every six years.

School evaluation is that effort by the local school staff to take a comprehensive look at the school's program, operation, and effect. The school determines how closely its purposes and philosophy coincide with its actual practices and the degree to which its stated objectives are being reached. It is a three-phased program: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, April 9, 2002, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to meet the requirements referred to above.

The entire staff of Emery High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Gwen Callahan is commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for the generally fine program being provided for Emery High School students, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more adequately meet the needs of the students of Emery High School.

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12/20/2002

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EMERY HIGH SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Gwen Callahan.....Principal
David Bird.....Assistant Principal

Counseling

Adele Huntington.....Counselor

Support Staff

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Karrie BehlingAide
Gaylene CoxAide
Dixie FielderAide
Tammy GilsonAide
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Maryellen Elmer	Nancy Martinez	Charles Wagoner
Darrell Gardner	Duane Merrell	Valene Wakefield
Steven Gordon	James Nelson	Wendy Whittle

EMERY HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

Emery High School, in partnership with parents and community, fosters educational excellence where students acquire the skills, knowledge, and character necessary for successful, lifelong learning in an ever-changing world.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- * We believe every child can learn.
- * We believe students have unique and individual needs and should be provided with a variety of instructional approaches to maximize opportunities for success in education.
- * We believe a variety of tools should be used to assess student knowledge, skills, and achievement.
- * We believe there should be positive relationships and mutual respect between students and staff within our school community.
- * We believe our commitment to professional development is imperative.
- * We believe our curriculum should be based on the State Core Curriculum.
- * We believe in teaching skills that enable students to become confident, self-directed, lifelong learners.
- * We believe students learn best in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment and that teachers have the major responsibility for establishing and maintaining that environment.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Lori Gardner, Eisenhower Junior High School, Granite District
Visiting Team Chairperson,

Ralph C. Squire, Manti High School, South Sanpete District

Tom Montoya, Helper Junior High School, Carbon District

Ed Reynolds, Whitehorse High School, San Juan District

Beverly M. Safley, Altamont High School, Duchesne District

Jerry Evans, Math Specialist, Utah State Office of Education

Georgia Loutensock, Education Specialist, Utah State Office of Education

VISITING TEAM REPORT

EMERY HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

The profile of Emery High School was a study of the school's role in the community and programs offered by the school, and included a wide range of data.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of their profile?*

It is apparent that the faculty is beginning to use data to determine the needs of their students and the effectiveness of programs. From the data, it is clear that Emery High School provides a wide range of programs. Students have opportunities to prepare for post-high school education or job placement. The concerted effort on the part of the administration and juvenile justice system has had a significant impact of the numbers of students truant, and on those who might otherwise drop out.

b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

Those who use the data need to evaluate its purpose and effectiveness. In some cases the information was incomplete, or not clearly defined. For the purpose of the manual, the school profile and data interpretation needs to be better organized.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- * Use data to determine who is not succeeding.
- * Conduct a survey of graduates to assess programs' effectiveness. (Do programs fully prepare students for post-high school experiences?)
- * Study the correlation between reading ability and school success.
- * Study the effectiveness of work-based learning experiences.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

The faculty and administration have spent two years engaged in the self-study process. Data was collected, and parents, students, and community members were

surveyed. Findings were shared with parents, students, and community members through the School Community Council. Considerable time was spent developing a mission statement and belief statements.

A committee of staff, administration, and parents was formed to develop a shared vision for student learning and to define desired results for student learning. Four goal areas were identified, and then the committee worked to collect data to document students' current level of achievement of the goals. This data is to be used to assess the needs of students and serve as baseline data to gauge future improvement.

Focus groups were formed initially to develop the school profile and collect information. They were not used to conduct an analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The school's self-study does not do justice to the variety of programs and services offered not only to students, but to the community. Some of the information gathered did not appear to be fully disseminated to the faculty and community. Data was collected, and significant findings were extrapolated; however, these were not clearly communicated in the study. The focus group analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness is necessary to developing better communication and greater understanding of school programs and strengths.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Emery High School identified four goal areas for students, areas which they have deemed most in need of improvement. Each goal area, with the exception of Community Building, defines desired results for student learning. The four goal areas are:

1. Community Building: Emery High School will encourage parental and student involvement by providing the following:
 - o Conferences to discuss, plan, and improve student learning.
 - o Committees for decision-making.
2. Responsible Citizenship: Emery High School will provide the following student opportunities:
 - o To learn about and demonstrate individual responsibilities.
 - o To learn about and demonstrate integrity.
 - o To learn about and demonstrate healthy lifestyles.

3. Employability: Emery High School will provide the following student opportunities:
 - o To learn and practice employability skills such as functioning in a system.
 - o To communicate effectively.
 - o To be self-motivated.
 - o To use complex thinking.
 - o To work collaboratively.
 - o To show flexibility with diversity.
 - o To create quality work.
4. Lifelong Learning: Emery High School will provide the following student opportunities:
 - o To make and meet goals.
 - o To meet essential subject area standards (specific area to be reading).
 - o To learn to value and to apply the knowledge learned.
 - o To seek learning on their own.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) *To what extent does the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

The accreditation committee commends Emery High School's efforts and work in revising their mission statement. Evidence validates a collaborative effort by administration, parents, and community members to make the school mission statement fit the needs of the school. The process involved discussion, reflective writing on the part of students, and public meetings for parents and community members. Effort was expended to make the mission statement clear and unambiguous. Once the mission statement was agreed upon and articulated, it became the driving force in the development of the school's belief statements.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

Emery High School is to be commended in its efforts to align belief statements to their mission statement. The belief statements are the result of a thorough assessment of Emery High School's needs and stakeholder concerns. There is clearly a strong commitment on the part of the school administration and staff to providing a wide range of educational opportunities and to promoting student success.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

A committee was formed to define the DRSLs. Its efforts focused on "developing a vision of what we expect our students to achieve on a schoolwide basis." The committee, in reviewing the mission statement, determined that it encompassed three areas of concern: (1) Preparing all students for post-high school experiences, (2) collaborating with parents to teach effective social skills and values, and (3) teaching and learning in a safe environment. Clearly the intent of the DRSLs aligns to the mission and beliefs of the school. However, the Visiting Team recommends that they be rewritten so that they articulate what **all students** should understand and be able to do. It is recommended that the school committee define the DRSLs so that they represent observable and measurable behaviors that cross all discipline areas and that can be assessed.

Curriculum Development:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure that the curriculum is based on clearly defined standard and the Utah Core Curriculum (with the inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

The administration and faculty of Emery High School are to be commended for their dedication to providing a wide range of quality programs for their students. It is evident that teachers know and apply the Utah Core Curriculum standards when choosing instructional methods and materials. Teachers demonstrated the ability to address the diverse needs of learners in their classrooms. It is also evident that many teachers work collaboratively within their departments.

It is recommended that teachers work together to integrate curricula and include the Utah Life Skills.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the schools desired results for student learning?*

The committee that developed the desired results for student learning had input from all stakeholders. Once the DRSLs were defined, they were shared with the school staff and community. Visiting Team members report that teachers indicated that they know of the DRSLs, but several indicated that they had not conducted their departmental analysis with the DRSLs in mind. In fact, the departmental analyses that were submitted as part of the accreditation report reveal that some departments have established their own desired results for student learning.

It is recommended that each department and every teacher assess their curricula in light of the schoolwide desired results for student learning and incorporate them into an integrated action plan.

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

The teaching staff shows clear evidence of the use of written assessments. However, the extent to which a variety of alternative assessments such as portfolios, performance assessments, projects, and group discussions are used to assess the learning of all students in all situations is unclear. Students reported that in many classes, defined expectations for student achievement are not clearly stated.

Schoolwide assessments, including SATs, CRTs and USOE Basic Skills Tests are used to assess student achievement. Those teachers who use the Basic Skills Tests clearly define expected levels of achievement.

While some departments and teachers effectively use SAT and CRT results to guide curricular and instructional decisions, training needs to be provided to enhance all teachers' understanding of the tests in order to set clear and specific expectations for student achievement. Disaggregated data may be useful in accomplishing this task. It is recommended that reading skills be more accurately assessed by using an assessment from the USOE approved list.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

The form of assessments observed during the accreditation visit, which included written assessments and individual projects, reflect their intended purpose. The extent to which these assessments reflect schoolwide performance standards is unclear. The use of scoring rubrics at both the classroom and schoolwide levels may be useful in assisting stakeholders to determine whether students have met performance standards.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

It is evident from feedback from students and parents that the faculty of Emery High School is dedicated to providing a safe environment where students are encouraged and supported in taking risks and in learning and applying new skills. The Visiting Team is confident that the staff is committed to fair and equitable assessment of student performance. It is recommended that the faculty study and implement the use of multiple forms of assessment, and identify performance standards to further guarantee equity and fairness.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The leadership of the school has focused professional development on fostering student achievement. Resources have been allocated to ensure that the faculty has time and opportunity to extend their learning and to collaborate. Teachers report that, through these efforts, they are engaging in meaningful conversation centered on student work and achievement. District and school leaders are to be commended for the degree to which they allocate time for professional development.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision-making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

The administration is knowledgeable and energetic in its drive to implement an effective continuous improvement model. They have spent the past two years compiling data and using it to determine future courses of action. They have empowered stakeholders as decision-makers.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

The administration has used various sources of data to assess student achievement. As they have engaged in the process, they have become aware of additional information they need in order to assure that all students have opportunities for success.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

The staff, students, parents, and community members commended the leadership for their efforts in providing a safe and positive learning environment. Their stewardship is evident in the physical state of the building, the way they interact with students, and the degree of respect and regard they are given by the adults with whom they work. It is obvious that they are dedicated to students and to the community.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

As stated earlier, the administration has aligned resources to facilitate school reform efforts. School leadership has supported dialogue and study to focus on student achievement.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

School leadership has provided the means by which parents, students, teachers, support personnel and community members can have a voice in decision-making. Open invitations have been extended to all stakeholders throughout the two-year process.

Now that the initial work has been completed, it is strongly recommended that the school leadership team use focus groups to conduct a schoolwide assessment based on the NASCU criteria.

Community Building:

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

It is evident that Emery High School is an integral part of the community. The staff and administration work closely with parents, community businesses, agencies, and governmental entities to develop quality programs and promote student success. Many community activities and traditions center around the school.

In some departments there appears to be some concern as to the degree to which community members try to exert influence over the school. It is recommended that departmental and school policies clearly define the parameters for business partnerships.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

The school is to be highly commended for the degree to which it has established partnerships and alliances with programs of higher education.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

Almost every department reported in the self-study that their teachers are involved in professional development of some type. Many of these activities are conferences or professional development activities that last one or two days, with little or no follow-up to report on implementation of the content of the activity. Departments report

that they do not hold department meetings, or that they hold them on an infrequent basis, with only a few reporting that department meetings are held on a regular basis. It is recommended that all departments hold regular meetings and that teachers who have participated in professional development activities share their knowledge and skills with members of their department as a part of the meeting. It is recommended that the administration support and promote the inclusion of professional development programs that foster change and exemplify best teaching practices. It is recommended that the school faculty develop a professional development plan that facilitates the implementation of the school's DRSLs and includes follow-up activities in which teachers report on their progress and share their achievements.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The administration at the district and school levels is very supportive of teacher participation in professional development activities. There is evidence that teachers share materials, instructional practices and skills, and content knowledge with each other on an informal basis. It is suggested that the administration structure formal opportunities to share information and engage educators in discussion and reflection centered on best practices and school reform.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (NASCU) STANDARDS I-X

Standard I—Educational Program

This standard is met.

Standard II—Student Personnel Services

This standard is met.

Standard III—School Plant and Equipment

This standard is met.

Standard IV—Library Media Program

This standard is met.

Standard V—Records

This standard is met.

Standard VI –School Improvement (This is addressed in the self-study.)

This standard is met.

Standard VII—Preparation of Personnel

This standard is met.

Standard VIII—Administration

This standard is met.

Standard IX—Teacher Load

This standard is met.

Standard X—Activities

This standard is met.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS - ACTION PLAN

- a) *To what extent is the schoolwide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

With the accreditation process, school staff has looked at student achievement using many sources of data. They have designed some desired results for student learning that are credible and relevant. Teachers and counselors have conducted an analysis of themselves and their work in departments. However, the staff has not gone through the process of evaluating instructional and organizational effectiveness. The school community needs to revisit this step in the process for school reform. Because this was not done, the action plan, as written, is not focused on schoolwide change to promote student learning and performance for all students. The action plan focuses on some of the commendable programs of the school, and defines some of the expected behavior of the adults, but it does not clearly define actions that will take place to bring about change.

It is recommended that Emery High School review the essential elements of their DRSLs and develop a focused plan to implement changes.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, schoolwide and system-wide?*

The administration, faculty, and staff of Emery High School are to be commended for their commitment to students and to the community to provide outstanding programs and services. Many of Emery's educators have been recognized for their professionalism and experience. However, the impression left with the Visiting Team was that there was not clear understanding of the action plan. Teachers, in developing departmental reports, defined goals that were not copasetic to the schoolwide DRSLs and developed action steps that were separate and distinct from the school's plan.

In reviewing the plan, much of the responsibility for its implementation and follow-through falls on the administration. It is recommended that time be given to developing consensus as to what is needed in the action plan, and incorporating action steps which invite commitment and accountability for all stakeholders.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the schoolwide action plan appear to be?*

The evaluation portion of the action plan rests primarily with the accumulation of data, much of which provides valid information. However, there appear to be a few means of evaluation built into the process that would meaningfully inform teachers of student learning and teacher performance. It is recommended that the staff and faculty consider sources of data such as curriculum maps, student performance assessments, and assessments based on rubrics to help determine the plan's effectiveness.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- Emery High School has a very cohesive faculty. Teachers are attentive to the needs of their students and work to develop programs that provide numerous opportunities for success and development of skills that will serve students after high school.
- The faculty and administration have demonstrated a sincere willingness to look critically at school programs and effectiveness. They have utilized data to help shape school policy and identify students who are at risk. Teachers are learning how to use data to shape instruction, assessment, and curriculum development.
- Emery High School is truly a community learning center. The school facilitates lifelong learning through its affiliation with several institutions of higher learning. Students can emerge from Emery High School with skills, certification, or college credit which allows them to pursue further educational or employment opportunities.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended that the staff reevaluate the desired results for student learning so that they articulate what all students should understand or be able to do. The desired results for student learning need to cross all discipline areas, and be observable and measurable students behaviors that can be assessed.
- The faculty and administration, through their use of focus groups, need to conduct an analysis of instructional effectiveness to support students' achievement of the desired result for student learning.
- Re-evaluate the school action plan to align with the desired results for student learning.
- Collect and disaggregate data to assess the effectiveness of the action plan.
- Inform community members, politicians, and stakeholders of the positive programs that greatly affect student learning and achievement.